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MINNESOTA

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2307

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December 8, 2006

The Honorable Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula
Minister of Home Affairs of South Africa
cnr Maggs and Petroleum Streets, Waltloo, Pretoria
South Africa

Dear Ms. Mapisa-Nqakula,

I would like to send my greetings and thank you for your efforts to represent the United States' interests in South Africa. I believe the relationship between the U.S. and South Africa is very important for facing the many challenges that exist in the region.

I am writing to express my deep concern over the violence being targeted at Somali immigrants that are seeking refuge in South Africa. The state of Minnesota is home to the largest community of Somalis outside of Somalia, and I have received extensive communication from this community regarding the mistreatment of their brethren residing in South Africa. Indeed, the incidents against Somalis have been so widespread that they have received attention in the United States media.

Over the past several months, I have received extensive reporting of attacks that have claimed the lives of numerous Somali refugees, particularly the owners of small businesses that compete with South African businesses. There are estimates that between 20 and 40 Somalis have been murdered in South Africa in the last 10 months. Additionally, the violent discrimination against Somalis was demonstrated last August in Masiphumelele when a mob of more than 200 men and women destroyed numerous Somali-owned shops. Only the intervention of the local police prevented the murder of the shop owners.

I understand that in response to these disturbing trends, the Government of South Africa has established a counter-xenophobia unit in the Department of Home Affairs. While I applaud this as a necessary first step in addressing the issue of violence targeting Somalis, I respectfully urge you to develop and implement a plan that will help ensure the safety and freedom of Somali immigrants in South Africa.

I thank you for your time and look forward to seeing progress on this urgent matter. As a member of the Senate of the United States, I am deeply interested in this matter that has affected numerous Somali families residing in my state. I am proud to serve a community of Somali refugees in Minnesota and will be monitoring the situation in South Africa to ensure that their loved ones are also secure.

Sincerely,



Norm Coleman
United States Senate

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